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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**First Lady Sandra Deal and DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle to visit
Mulberry Creek Elementary Pre-K Class in Harris County**

School won contest for Most Books Read during “Georgia Reads Aloud Day”

ATLANTA, Ga., (May 11, 2012) – Georgia’s First Lady Sandra Deal and Bobby Cagle, commissioner of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL), will visit with Pre-K students at Mulberry Creek Elementary School in Harris County on **Friday, May 18, 2012** from noon until 1:00 PM. Mrs. Deal and Mr. Cagle will congratulate the class on winning a recent contest for Most Books Read during “Georgia Reads Aloud Day,” held **Wednesday, April 25, 2012**. Students at Mulberry Creek read 487 books between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. Statewide, classrooms reported reading an impressive 13,993 books in only 11 hours.

“We are grateful to all of the participants, especially the parents, teachers, & mentors who joined together for Georgia Reads Aloud Day,” said Mrs. Deal. “Children model their reading habits by listening to adults. It is important for children to learn proper pronunciation, expression, pauses and cadence. It is my hope that Georgia Reads Aloud Day has encouraged our children to read to others and become young teachers themselves.”

“This was a landmark day for reading by our state’s youngest learners,” Cagle added. “One of the simplest ways to boost a child’s learning potential is by making books an integral part of their lives. Reading to preschoolers and letting them read to you helps build stronger relationships, supports basic speech skills and enhances future academic achievement.”

“We are thrilled that Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Lisle have been honored and recognized for their collaborative efforts in helping students develop a lifelong love for reading,” said Dr. Justin Finney, principal of Mulberry Creek Elementary School. “Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Lisle, and their innovative ideas, are prime examples of why Harris County has such great schools.”

“I am extremely proud of our commitment to reading in Harris County,” said Dr. Craig Dowling, superintendent of Harris County Schools. “This is a wonderful example of teacher collaboration to benefit our Pre-K students. My congratulations go out to Mrs. Thomas, Mrs. Lisle, and all of the students who participated in this program.”

The Month of the Young Child is based upon the Week of the Young Child, which is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), www.naeyc.org. NAEYC first established the Week of the Young Child in 1971, recognizing that the early childhood years (birth through age 8) lay the foundation for children's success in school and later life.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.

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